



Donald Morris / an analysis

Intelligence system needs resuscitation

Last of a 4-part series. Donald Morris served with the CIA 17 years. He has been a columnist for The Houston Post since his retirement from government service in 1972.

In three short years, the United States has almost totally destroyed its intelligence community. The satellite photography program is still intact, but the other functions are eroded to the point of paralysis.

We have no covert action capacity abroad. We have little or no covert propaganda capacity. We cannot provide decent official or unofficial cover for our intelligence officers stationed abroad. We cannot retain classified material — the entire range of our files is open to every crank who wants to paw through them, and any media outlet can publish with impunity whatever it can find.

We cannot recruit agents, because we cannot guarantee them anonymity. Neither foreigners nor our own citizens care to cooperate with our intelligence organs — any contact is liable to result in a ruined reputation.

We cannot investigate subversion in this country — almost every investigative tool has been barred. We cannot open, let alone maintain, the files which provide the raw data banks for any analysis.

Obviously, there were abuses, as there are in any system. They were not and are not understood — above all, that the abuses stemmed not from the system but from pressures brought on the system by the executive branch. The system stood up rather well to those pressures (for example, under extreme White House pressure it discussed assassina-

tions and took tentative steps to look into means, but not once did it ever mount such an effort overseas).

The abuses were all recognized and stopped by the intelligence community itself, years before the first congressional clowns discovered the headlines to be harvested in file-fishing. They've had their field day now — a few laggards are picking at the carcass, and the media and all "right-thinking" citizens can take pride in having dismantled a grave danger to our democracy.

What have we accomplished? Soviet diplomatic representation has tripled in the last decade. They have established relations with most countries in the world, and their embassies, consulates, trade missions, tourist offices and air and maritime commissions are bulging.

As always, a full 50 percent of all Soviets stationed abroad are intelligence officials — two-thirds of them civil KGB and one-third of them military GRU. More than half their ambassadors are former KGB officials. The trade missions run well over half KGB.

The press? Novosti, the Soviet news agency, is a KGB concern. Granted, the Soviet Union doesn't have a free press, but being intelligence officers has never hampered KGB officials from covering events in the West. Since Novosti slots are at a premium, Tass, the other agency, is a GRU concern. At the time I left the CIA in 1972, I had never encountered a Tass representative who was not a GRU officer — as are not only all Soviet military, air and naval attaches, but all civilians in the service attache offices.

This swollen "legal apparat" is paralleled by a discrete "illegals apparat." We continue

to facilitate Soviet travel in America — consulates in various cities — and interfere only with the FBI capability to monitor the Soviets.

Our country's leading newspaper has devoted series after endless series to exposure of American intelligence community files, personnel, operations and techniques. The sheer volume of copy is staggering; page after solid page of facts and names. The last series, about the CIA and the press, uncovered no abuses, but was printed anyway.

What that newspaper has not done, not for years, is to devote a series, or even an article, to the Soviet intelligence community and its operations in America. Not a word, for the simple reason not one of its reporters is ever assigned such a dull subject, and would hardly know where to start looking if he were.

Our community by now may be terminal. We need competent, professional leadership assigned — in-house choices — and then left alone. We need quick modifications to the ridiculous Freedom of Information Act. We need an official secrets act with teeth in it.

We need access to decent cover for our officers abroad. We need political leadership which will invite public attention to Soviet intelligence advances during our Roman circus, and leadership which will squelch the headline hunters in Congress. And, starting with The New York Times, we need a press that will at last put the horse back in front of the cart and start an examination and exposure of KGB rather than CIA operations.

The Soviets have a lovely phrase — "Koto komu?" — or "Who is doing what to whom?" It must be the most overworked cliché in the Kremlin these days.